▼ MARCH 15 • 1996

Spare Change

Our Voice on the Prairies

▼ SOLD BY DONATION

PHOTOS • CLAUDETTE LANGUEDOC

FOOD PHOTO • SHELLY KNAPP

Lanny MacDonald had a great time at the Special Olympics

How long could your family live on these groceries?

STORY ON PAGES 6 - 7

Michael Skates for Gold

SPECIAL OLYMPIANS HAVE A GREAT TIME SEE PAGE 10

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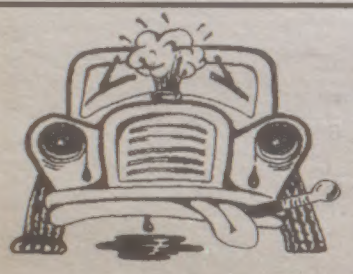

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Some do drugs, one crosses road

Pensioner groups are furious about a new road sign warning of elderly people crossing the road, claiming that the depiction of a doddery, hunchbacked couple with walking sticks is "a gross insult to the over-50's". If American Ira Schulbert is anything to go by, however, such signs might be necessary. Mr Schulbert, 94, of Briggsdale, Colorado, has, for the past decade, wreaked untold havoc in his efforts to cross the street to the local grocery store. Although less than 30 feet wide, it takes the perambulating pensioner some two hours to get from one side of the road to the other, including a 30 minute rest midway on a fold-up garden chair. "Its unbelievable," said one motorist. "You're driving along and suddenly you have to swerve because there's an old man fast asleep in the middle of the highway." Numerous police warnings have failed to deter Mr Schulbert, and he is now planning to wheel a small portable television with him so he can watch Oprah en route. "Kids do drugs, I cross roads," he said reasonably. ❖

Fruit revenge: The tackle of the avocado

People have been tackling burglars dressed in a variety of exotic costumes. In Yeovil, a robber was wrestled to the ground by a man wearing a Mr Blobby outfit. "I cried, I arrest you in the name of Noel Edmonds!," said the bubble-wrapped hero. "Then I blobbied him!" In Israel, meanwhile, a mugger was cornered by a selection of public-spirited fruit. Moshe Arel was escaping after seizing a woman's handbag when he heard a muffled shout of: "Fruit revenge!" behind him. "I turned round," recalled Mr Arel, "and saw two satsuma oranges running after me. I think they were the seedless ones."
The satsumas pursued Mr Arel down several streets and into a car park, where they were joined by a pineapple and "one of those Japanese things with knobbly skin". "I thought I'd got away," said Mr Arel, "but then I saw the avocado. It said `Go on make my day!' and attacked me. It was very strong." The fruits, it later turned out, were soldiers attending a costume party. "To be arrested by a pineapple is a bitter blow," said a traumatized Mr Arel. ❖

Terrible toilets worse than prawns

It has all been going horribly wrong on the toilet lately. In New York, there have been several reports of lavatories exploding underneath their owners. "It just erupted," said one victim. "Now I'm using a Pyrex fruit bowl, to be on the safe side." More traumatic were the experiences of Japanese businessman Keo Katoki, who spent two days with his arms trapped down his office lavatory. Mr Katoki, 41, of Tokyo, was in the toilet late one Friday when disaster struck. "I was adjusting my Rolex," he explained, "when I accidentally dropped it in the bowl. I immediately plunged my arm in, but it got wedged in the U-bend and I couldn't move." The embarrassed executive was unable to reach his mobile phone, whilst his cries of "I'm stuck in the toilet!" went unheeded, and it was only on Monday morning that cleaners were able to smear his arm with Vaseline and slip him out. "My wife said, `Where have you been?," recalled Mr Katoki, "I said 'in the toilet!' and she said `Was it prawns?' but I was too tired to explain." ❖

Shiny shoes slip with a dead load

After they're gone they can still get the drop on you; at some funerals anyway. In Tankerton, Kent, a coffin accidentally fell out of a van, spilling its occupant in front of horrified mourners. "Initially I thought `Oh my god, is he hurt?," recalled one onlooker. "But then I remembered he was dead anyway." Still more unceremonious were events in Cambridgeshire, where a pallbearer was crushed underneath a coffin. Arthur Pelborough, 55, was carrying Mr Marvin Johnston to his final resting place when the accident happened. "He had highly polished black shoes," said one mourner. "I couldn't stop looking at them, they were so shiny. And then I saw them approaching a pile of soggy leaves and thought `There's going to be trouble here!' And I was right." It seems that Mr Pelborough slipped on the leaves and lost his balance, tumbling to the ground with the coffin on top of him."At first I thought it was some trendy new part of the service," said one eyewitness. "But when I saw the vicar's face I realised things had balled up badly." ❖

Above articles compiled by Paul Sussman in ***The Big Issue****, London England's street-sold magazine.*

VENDOR · *Profile*

Ken

BY KEITH WILEY

There's nothing really dramatic about Ken's story. He's an ordinary guy who sells Spare Change cause he's got to. He used to drive a cab. He used to own his own house. He was on welfare, but wanted to make his own living. He sells the newspaper.

PHOTO • PETER DEVOS

Ken came into the Spare Change office recently with a young girl, a street kid he'd befriended and was helping out. He thought she might like to try selling the paper to get ahead herself. She really appreciated his concern... he's a nice guy, she says.

There's no big crisis in Ken's life, but it's interesting to hear how he came to be a newspaper vendor. When the motor went on his '84 Olds that he was driving as a taxi, Ken just didn't have the money to replace it. Cab driving had been getting tougher and tougher, anyway. He was driving 12 hour days, sometimes up to 16 and 18 hours, but he still didn't have the money to replace the cab. Or the time to have a life.

Ken had been feeling the squeeze as a cabbie for a couple of years. He'd lost his house before that. Cab earnings hadn't been enough to pay the mortgage. I had it listed, he said, but before he could sell it they foreclosed on him and he lost it all.

So when his cab died, Ken figured he'd give up on that business. Just too many cabs on the road to make any money, he says.

But he didn't count on the little twist that happened next. Riding a bike on a valley bike path in the rain he got going too fast and his wet brakes wouldn't slow him down; he hit a puddle and slipped. No big deal, he didn't really tumble, but the handlebar came down hard on his wrist and broke it badly. In a cast for three months, Ken couldn't get another job. He had to eat; he went to social assistance. That was for about four months and then he started selling the newspaper, which he's been doing ever since.

Ken works hard at it, starting at 3 or 4 in the afternoon and going to 11 or 12 at night, sometimes later. He says he likes meeting the people...but it's the money he earns that keeps him at it. He doesn't have a lot of other prospects right now. "I'd be interested in another sales job," he says, "I've been driving cab or in sales all my life." He shares a townhouse with some friends, and pays his share of the expenses. But the last couple of months of winter have been hard, he says.

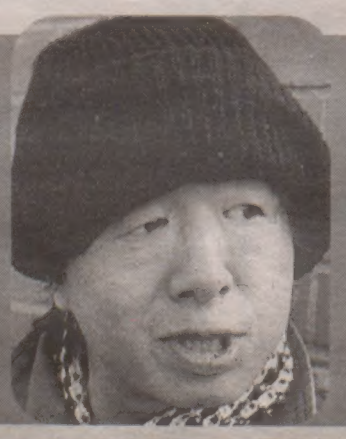
He's had some good experiences on the corner, people dropping off whole meals for him, buying him coffees, even taking him out to eat in restaurants. There's been some tough stuff too. A panhandler took exception to Ken selling the paper, and started swearing at him and punching him. That fellow made a mistake. Ken's taken 21 years of martial arts. But he just held the guy down until the police came and arrested him. Ken's a gentle, soft-spoken fellow and he says he wouldn't want to hurt anyone. Driving cab he had to handle some aggressive people sometimes, but, according to him, nothing major.

He's got warm clothes but the last couple of months, the heart of winter, have been hard, he says. People don't stop as often when it's that cold. Now it's warming up, Ken hopes sales will pick up. It's his living. ❖

The people who bring you Spare Change

This newspaper exists because of the efforts of the people who sell it to you on the street, the vendors. For our vendors **Spare Change** is a job that helps them to be independent and self-employed. Each issue we highlight one of our vendors in Vendor Profile to let you know a little bit about the people who bring you **Spare Change.** ❖

Spare Change Authorized Vendor



Vendor Name _____

Number _____

Authorized by _____

SPARE CHANGE VENDOR'S CODE

- I will be sober at all times while working
- I will be polite to all members of the public
- I will vend only in areas that are authorized

All ***Spare Change*** vendors are required to wear an ID badge (contents above) and abide by a code of conduct. If you have any comments about our vendors, phone our distribution manager in your city (see page 5).

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LETTERS

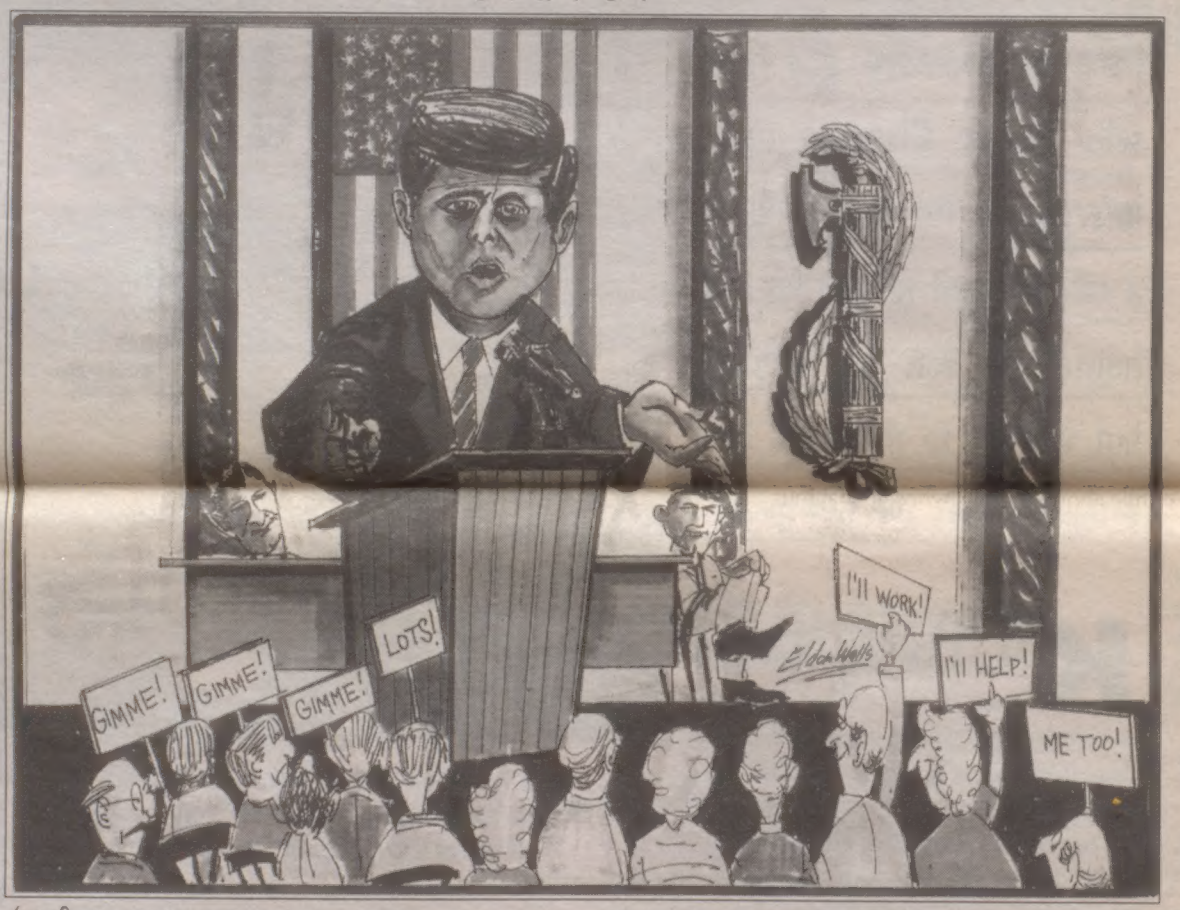
Pedway eviction makes reader furious

After reading about the vendors in Edmonton, Laurette Baron of Oxford Properties "asking" vendors to leave, I was furious. I thought, this is a public place, not just for the Gucci suit crowd. Why don't they find somewhere else to walk if it bothers them? These vendors are keeping to themselves. They are doing nothing illegal, or causing a disturbance. I buy mine from a polite gentleman in Calgary. Only in Edmonton, you say? It figures. ❖

ELIZABETH EVANS
CALGARY

"Quotation" Quiz

BY L.R.C.



"ASK NOT WHAT YOUR COUNTRY CAN DO FOR YOU BUT ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR COUNTRY." (J.F.K.)

The things they say

"It's so cold you can see the lies coming up from a politician's mouth."

– David Letterman, on the paralyzing, icy weather in the northeastern US.

"I'm not in a position to be choosy, but the teens are a good age for women."

– Rabbi Henri Brand, 61, to the matchmaker who is going to find him a new wife.

"I wanted kids, so I went to a sperm bank.
But then I thought: 'I have a husband, so I might as well try him.'"

– LaToya Jackson

"Walter's not an actor. He's a normal person."

– Sophia Loren on Walter Matthau

Renegades, black markets and the street corner

The phone rings: "I'm suing you, and the whole management of **Spare Change**, for bad management. Get ready to go to court." Click. I know the voice; it's Steve. He's an excitable guy. He sells this newspaper and right now he's annoyed that some other vendors are drunk, or abusive to customers. He figures it hurts his sales, and his reputation. He's right. But I don't really expect a lawsuit.

Steve's naming an on-going problem that he and many other vendors get really upset about: people selling the newspaper who are discourteous and under the influence. They are breaking two of the rules for newspaper vendors. And there are only 3 rules, they are printed every issue below the vendor profile on page 3: "I will be sober at all times while working; I will be polite to all members of the public; I will vend only in areas that are authorized."

Almost all of our **Spare Change** vendors are hard-working people who stick to the rules, almost all of the time. And **Spare Change** distributors enforce the rules, too. They "cut off" people who are out of line, refusing to sell them papers. But strict enforcement is tough. The people are independent entrepreneurs. They set their own hours and work all over the city.

Spare Change does respond to complaints from customers and from the public about vendors whose behaviour might be out of line. Cutting off a seller does have limited effect, however. One interesting development that makes enforcement tough is a "black market" in newspapers. A seller who is in the newspaper's good books could buy extra papers and turn and sell them to someone else who has been "cut off" for breaking the rules.

Some people pull old papers out of waste baskets and attempt to re-sell them.

Ask to see the badge.

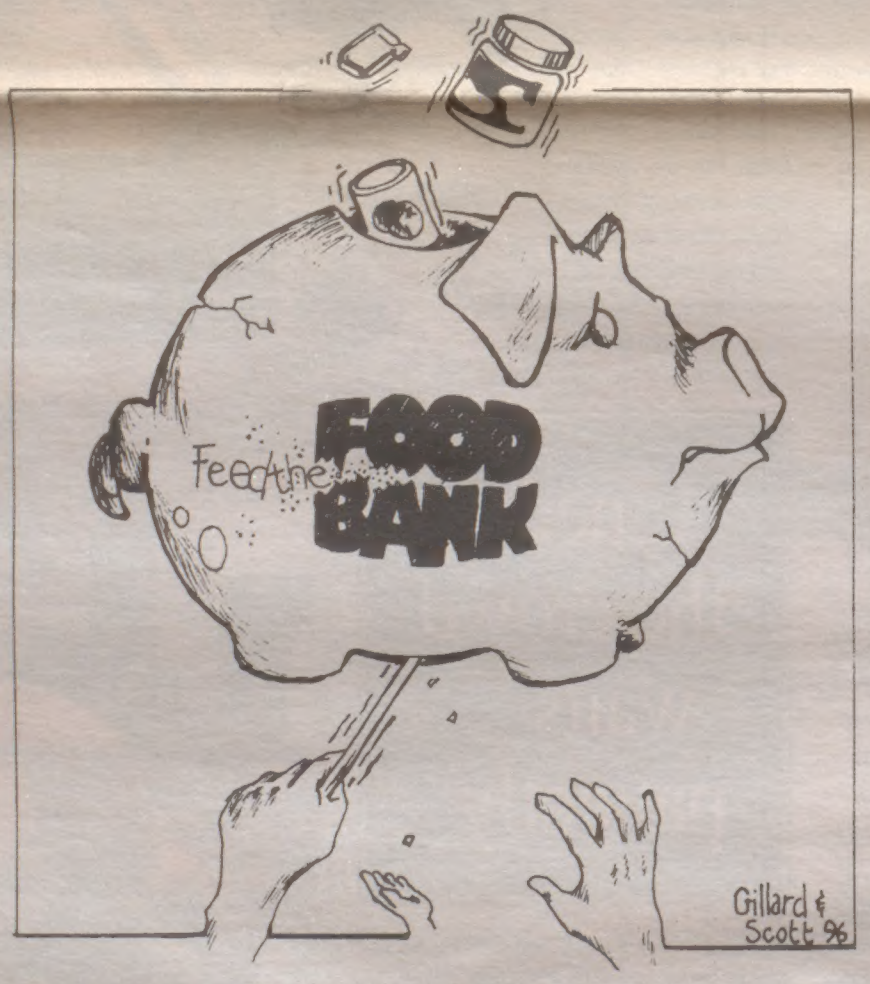
And not everyone who may offer you a paper on the street is a bona fide Spare Change vendor. The paper's sellers are issued an identification badge, which they display prominently while selling the paper. Customers should always ask to see the badge if it is not immediately evident. Everyone who can abide by the rules can become an authorized vendor, so if someone doesn't have a badge there's a good reason for it, and that person shouldn't be selling the paper.

Problems? Call us.

We're doing our best, on behalf of all the vendors who do work so hard, to keep all the vendors responsible. We appreciate your support, and we respond to complaints. If you have a problem with a vendor, call us with their name, the location and the details, even the number of their vendor badge, if possible, and we'll see what we can do. If you do run into an extreme situation with someone who is really out of line, call the police or security. Vendors have to be responsible citizens, too. If the situation is bad they are probably breaking the law and being disorderly. Like anyone else they have to take the consequences.

And if you run into a situation with a vendor that is particularly wonderful, pleasant or touching, call us too, we love to hear the great stories as well as the disappointing ones.

Running a street-sold newspaper is a shifting, day-to-day challenge. In this challenge we appreciate your concern and your support.



Food banks are old news

Are the food banks old news? We are talking about food banks again this issue, as we have many times before. They haven't gone away, the need is still there. But is the public spirit still behind them, as the need continues? The Food Banks are irrepressible in their energy, their commitment, and their ingenuity in new drives and new ways to keep up participation and contributions. They have to be. Recently two stories came our way that point again to the sad necessity of food banks. Old news, maybe. Still current and urgent news? Definitely!

New newspaper news

Just to tease you loyal readers, watch for big news next issue, the April 1 issue. We're not fooling! April 1 is **Spare Change** on the prairies' second birthday and we'll be celebrating with some exciting news. Hint: there's a tiny foreshadowing of what's to come on this month's cover. ❖

KEITH WILEY

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Thank you contributors:

• Michael Walters Glasel • Allison Kydd • Deanna Douglas for the movie review • Diane Scott for the editorial page cartoon • Linda Dumont • Susan Andrews for the Crossword • David Jones for cartoons • Heather Stump for the very moving memoriam on the back page • Marjorie Bencz for Food For Thought • Shelly Knapp for photos, • Lorne Callaghan for the Quotation Quiz • Steve Gavin, belatedly, for all his work on last issue's feature on Randy Gregg's Fun Teams • Claudette Languedoc in Calgary. ❖

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Our Voice on the Prairies

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Spare Change is published to provide an income opportunity for economically marginalized people in our society while communicating about their issues to the public.

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"It's so cold in here I can't stop shaking"

BY LINDA DUMONT

PHOTOSHELLY KNAPP

It was a Friday afternoon. I was seated at my desk writing down the names of those who came in, and wearing my parka. Even so, the cold was nipping at my toes, and I wished I had worn my felt packs to work. I had the desk lamp turned on, more for heat for my writing hand to keep my fingers from cramping up than for the light.

The waiting room was full, with about thirty-five people seated and standing. A number of others, warned that the wait might be an hour or more before they were called, had gone upstairs to get a cup of coffee. One young mother had her open jacket wrapped around her child. "My daughter is freezing," she said. A few of those waiting showed impatience, but the rest simply waited, uncomplaining.

Maralyn, doing the filling, remarked, "It's so cold in here that since lunch time, I can't stop shaking." She is a dedicated volunteer who comes every week.

Outside the temperature was somewhere around minus twenty, and the heating system was unequal to the task of heating the draughty building. The door was constantly opening and closing as more people came in and others left, carrying their bags of food.

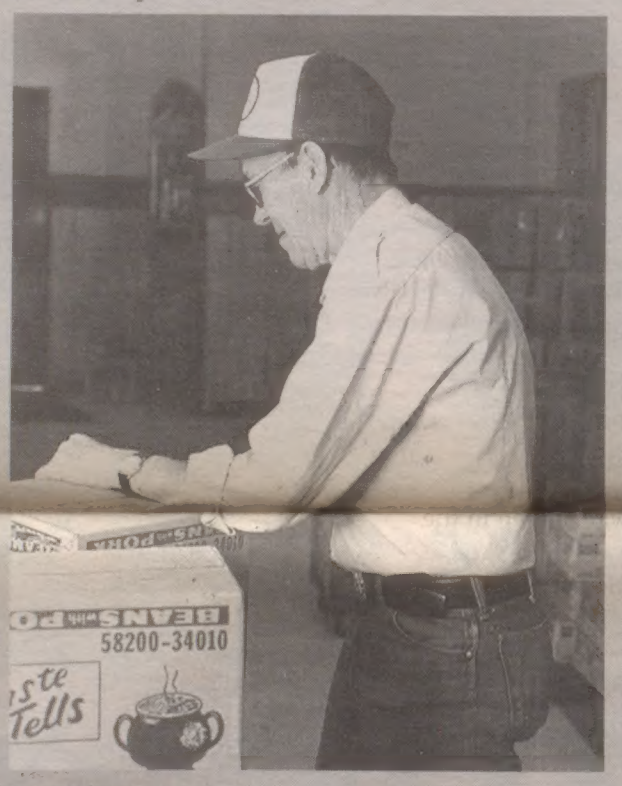
This is not a scene from a third world country, or the hungry thirties, but Canada in 1996. The location is the Mustard Seed Church food bank in Edmonton. The people are the poor. Many are on Supports for Independence (welfare), and since the cutbacks have had to rely on food banks to survive. Others are collecting Unemployment Insurance, or have been cut off welfare for any number of reasons.

Today, there are 195 people who have registered for food. That's roughly 500 people who will be fed, since most of those coming in have come on behalf of a family, or others who share their home. Mustard Seed is the busiest food bank in the city. Even in the sub-zero temperatures, they come. One woman remarked that she would have to make two trips, ten blocks each way, to take home the food for herself and her family. She wasn't complaining, simply stating the facts.

The staff of the food bank, ACE program workers and volunteers, work together to meet the need. It's a big job. Before anyone is allowed in the food has to be unloaded from a truck, sorted and shelved, then made up into bags for individual hampers and family hampers. Hampers to meet special needs are made up as needed.

Laurie Regelous, head pastor at the Mustard Seed, sees the food bank program there as essential. "I know there is a movement out there of people who don't believe in food banks. On one level, I agree, but I look at it the same way that I look at divorce. It's not the ideal, but the reality exists. No one would like to have a continued dependence on food banks. They exist as a necessary resource that people need access to sometimes, not by choice, but by necessity. I would like to work towards a society where we don't need food banks."

Having been on the other side of the desk at the food bank myself, I agree. For me, coming to a food bank was an act of desperation. I resented not the workers, nor the food, but the necessity of being there at all. It is unfortunate that in a country as affluent as Canada, we have people queuing up for food. ❖



Reg Bishop unpacking donations at the Edmonton Food Bank.

Lined up, the crowd waits patiently

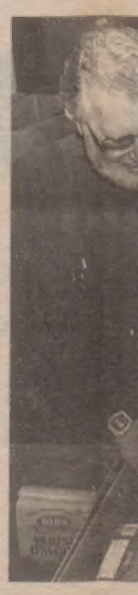
Ab W

BY IREN

Almost every day life throws som curve my way. Some little episo start out seemingly negative, th open my eyes and I'll need to chuckle Ha!" I'll have a little lesson.

I've had a debilitating illness for ma years been cult t work of th had t or 3 week in th that it wa stress and our " shift come and the p outin pliments th had receive our shift ev of these ber Being a pers avoided any confrontatio thought I h it and not s

All that caring in one little bag



▲ *Above, Mundy*

◀ *Hilde S*

bout Worth

E N E D A V I D S O N

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o chuckle or – "Ah

ess for many, many years, so it has been very difficult to keep working. Most of the time I had to work 2 or 3 days per week and only in the evening that night, as it was a bit less stressful. Over and over again our "unseen" shift would come to work and hear about the party or outing or comments the day shift d received. None of r shift ever got any these benefits. ing a person who oided any and all nfrontation, I just ought I had to take and not stand up

for myself. Doing this gradually eroded any sense of worth about myself and especially about my work.

Well, the time came when I couldn't work at all. I did not have enough income to pay my rent AND my food – so I had to go to the Food Bank. I was so humiliated. I'd grown up believing I had to take care of myself. I was crying when I went in the door, hoping no one would see me. I was so full of shame I could have walked under the door.

It took a bit of time, they asked my age, the number of people in my family. Then I took my bag of groceries, still with tears in my eyes, and left. I never saw the person who put it together. She (or he) just worked away unseen in the back room.

But when I opened that little box at home, I couldn't believe my eyes. It was so lovingly put together! As well as staples there was a little package of tea bags, sugars, creamers and – a miracle – little packages of cookies and buns. I couldn't remember when I'd last had any treats. It was as if the person had just put love in that box. This happened a few years ago now, and I still weep when I think of it.

There was a wonderful spiritual gift in that box, as well. That person could work and do this behind the scenes, and so profoundly affect me, with unseen love and care. Wow, our work, unseen, unheralded, seemingly uncared about, had merit too. People didn't see, but God did and he let me know this was his message to me, and to us. ❖

Above, from left to right: Hal O'Neil, Heather Liddell and Frank Mundy sort donations.

Hilde Staudt a food bank volunteer making a hamper.

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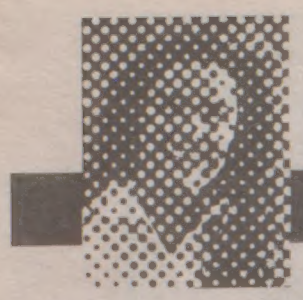

Emily VIA THE GREYHOUND BUS

BY ALLISON KYDD

You gotta stand up straight

Emily feels lonely and hurt after her phone call to Jeremy, so she's glad that Larry's waiting for her. When she finds out he's not quite what he seemed, she gets out of there fast. She's had her fill of the kind of guy who just wants to play around and then go home to his wife and children as if nothing had happened.

Emily made it to the gate just as they were removing the sign that said "Now Loading" from its hook. Someone glanced at her ticket, mumbled something like "might be out of luck" and rushed her through the door.

The bus was all closed up and ready to go, so she started hammering on the door while the ticket man tried to catch the driver's eye. Finally the door opened. Emily's knuckles were raw, but there was something satisfying about that. Almost as good as cursing or screaming.

Naturally the driver didn't look too pleased to be held up. He also seemed determined to open one of the luggage compartments for her, though she kept trying to tell him that she didn't have any luggage. After they'd wasted several minutes arguing about it, he finally believed her, checked her pass and let her on the bus.

Before too long Emily was huddled in another seat, her coat over her, her bag under her head. Just about the time she was thinking she'd be awake for the rest of the night, she must have fallen asleep, for the next thing she knew the driver was announcing Moosomin and a smoke break.

Her watch said 4:20 and it was still dark, but as the bus pulled in beside the Esso station with its big sign saying "Open 24 hours", Emily was suddenly wide awake.

She felt numb, of course, and stiff, but worse than that she knew she was going to throw up again. She began to stumble frantically toward the back of the bus. Was she even going to make it to the can this time?

The sign said "Occupied", but she rattled the door latch anyway. No response. She stumbled blindly back towards the front of the bus, almost fell down the steps, and into the cold. Her light shoes didn't give much protection in the snow and ice of the parking lot, but she managed to take cover in the shadow of some kind of storage shed.

At that point, Emily hardly noticed how cold she was. All she was thinking was that now no one could see her. Then she was bent over, and the little she'd eaten the day before was being wasted on the ground.

When she stopped heaving the smell and the faint heat rising from her own vomit in the snow fanned her face, and she'd have been sick again if there'd been anything left in her stomach.

Emily knew she'd probably felt this wretched before, but that didn't stop her from wishing she was dead this time. She was cold; she was alone; she was broke; she was miserable; she felt too weak and sick to move.

"You gotta stand up straight. Look at the world like you're strong, and the world'll think you're strong. Never helps nobody to show how you're feeling bad," that's what Kookum would say.

Well, this time Emily didn't even think she cared. Jeremy didn't want her, and other men only wanted her a night at a time. What was there left to be strong for?

When the cramps finally eased up, Emily took in that she was freezing cold in just her skirt and t-shirt. She'd left her coat inside the bus, of course. There hadn't been time to think of that.

About the same time she realized she didn't have a coat on, Emily noticed that the bus was starting to move. Away from her. She'd found her patch of darkness to be sick in, but that meant she was hidden from the driver too. She tried to pick her way back into the lighted area by the gas pumps, slipped on some ice and fell against a pile of cement blocks half-hidden in the snow. That'd be more bruises. Too bad nobody cared . . . .

Sure enough, when she'd gotten up again and over into the light, the bus was pulling out of the station and back onto the highway. She stood there coatless, with empty hands, and watched it build up speed and begin to fade into the distance.

"Life sucks, and then you die." That'd been one of Marty's favourite quips. Of course Marty didn't know about desperation. He'd never really had to struggle for anything, so it was easy for him to make a joke of it.

Emily found that the cold and the

shock of watching the bus drive away without her had cleared her head and calmed her queasy stomach. Obviously she wasn't ready to die quite yet.

She wrapped her arms around her body and dashed over to the service door. The teen-aged attendant looked up from his magazine.

"Where'd you come from?" he asked, like he was making conversation.

Emily found her teeth were chattering.

"The bus left without me," she said.

"Oh boy! Well, I guess you'll just have to wait for the next one. About ten o'clock I think."

Something else dawned on Emily and she had to lean against the door frame from the shock. Fortunately, she seemed to have used up her quota of crying for this trip. She'd hate to mist up in front of this kid.

"But m-my ticket and purse are on the bus," she stammered, her chin shaking from the cold. "I haven't got a bloody thing on me. I can't even buy a cup of coffee."

"Gee," said the attendant. Rather stupidly, or so it seemed to Emily.

"I don't suppose . . ." she began.

"Let me talk to Lil," said the boy. He left her and the sales counter unattended and disappeared through the door which said "Restaurant". Emily thought she smelled sausages and eggs as the door opened and closed, and that made her feel faint again.

Fortunately, there was a chair under the bubble gum and peanut dispensers. She sat down and leaned her head forward until it was hanging over her knees.

A hand touched her shoulder. It was the kid again.

"Lil says she'll buy you a cup of coffee. You just go ahead in. She's the only one out front this time of night."

A few heads turned towards Emily as she passed through from the service station to the restaurant. Truckers probably, stopping to refuel themselves as well as their machines. The woman named Lil must be the one in the yellow smock. She was doing refills of coffee and then came towards Emily with a not unfriendly expression.

"You the one that missed the bus?"

Emily nodded.

"And left your purse and everything behind you?"

Emily nodded.

"Well, come and sit down over here. This brew'll put skin on your bones. It's the bottom of the pot."

Lil led Emily to what seemed to be the staff booth.

"So what were you thinking of, getting off and leaving all your stuff behind? Some of us love our smokes, but not that bad."

"I-I don't smoke. But I was going to be – to throw up – and I didn't want to . . . you know."

Lil sat down across the table from her.

"What made you car sick? Got the "flu", or are you pregnant maybe?"

Emily stared back at her.

Since she'd been with Jeremy that was one of the things she'd never had to worry about. Something about a low sperm count, him having mumps as a child. They never bothered to use contraception, and in twelve years nothing'd come of it.

There was the other business, of course, but she'd made sure she had condoms in her purse the night she went to the bar alone. Sure she'd been angry at Jeremy – angry and lonely and wanting to get even with him for never having time for her, implying she wasn't his equal – but she still didn't want to risk picking up anything from a stranger. She owed him that care, however much he'd hurt her.

"You poor kid, you look like you've seen a ghost. It's not that bad, you know. I've been through it four times. Three of them practically grown and now a two year old. Thought my old man'd faint when I told him. He's older than me, almost sixty."

A picture of Jeremy's face flashed into Emily's mind. A memory of lying with him after making love, combing her fingers through the long thick greying hair on his chest.

What if. . . she thought. It couldn't be true, of course, but what if it was? ❖

End of installment ten;
to be continued

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MOVIE • *Review*

Margaret's Museum

is a Masterpiece

BY DEANNA DOUGLAS

When was the last time you saw a movie that really took you inside someone's mind, that drew you in so completely that you saw with their eyes, and felt with their heart?When did you last come away from a movie – or a play – that successfully carried you to a time and a place you have never been? If it's been too long, find out where the National Film Board's ***Margaret's Museum*** is playing, and see it.

And you'll be getting good use out your tax dollars in the process.

The lead is played skillfully by Helena Bonham Carter, who may not be a Canadian coal miner's daughter, but she is a natural for the role. It is her story; the tale of a Nova Scotia girl in a mining town. Her goal in life is simple; to hold on to her sanity in the face of incredible pain and powerlessness, to refuse to let the system take away her voice and her soul. And she succeeds.

Margaret's father and brother died in the mine, leaving her to live in a company house with her mother and grandfather, who is dying of miner's lung. They get no pension, no support whatsoever, except for the little an uncle can provide by working extra shifts down the mine.

As the story unfolds, Margaret finds herself falling in love with the one blue collar worker in town who will not give up his life for the extraction of fossil fuels. Her mother is bitter and hopeless after a lifetime of suffering, but her uncle works hard to keep her younger brother, too, out of the mine. Director Mort Rangen takes us into their lives and souls so completely that we can almost feel the pain when the inevitable happens, and they are forced to go to the pit. And Margaret's life must go on, after a fashion.

One of the things I have always envied about the Maritimes is the sense of real community they seem to have. But at least in the coal-mining town of ***Margaret's Museum***, the price they paid for that togetherness was much too high.

The forces of financial interdependence, and a complete ignorance of any real options outside the confines of their small town, combine to force the men to give up their lungs to the mine, their futures to the company store's line of credit, and their humanity to the system. And every time the siren rings high above the town, everybody drops everything and runs to the top of the shaft. They go to see if their husband, their father, their bread-earner, has come up the elevator on his own two feet – or in a body bag.

The setting is beautiful and the music is haunting. The story is personal, not political. The burden of debt and the hand of death have an almost physical presence in the film, but the love and beauty of the people and their land is undeniable and strong.

Feel their pain, and join their cry. Our choices in this life are no more equal than the weight of our sorrows. ❖

Special athletes have a great time at Olympics

BY CLAUDETTE LANGUEDOC

Michael seemed to fly as he sped around the rink in Calgary's Olympic Oval, finishing a half a lap ahead of his closest competitor, another skater from Alberta. Later that evening, sequins and eyes sparkling, Jackie stepped on to the ice and skated gracefully to a bronze medal. Michael Jameison and Jackie Wanamaker were among 500 athletes from across Canada competing in the Canadian Special Olympics in Calgary. The athletes came from every province to compete in floor hockey, speed and figure skating, alpine and nordic skiing and snowshoeing.

The games are called "Special" Olympics because they were created for people who are mentally challenged.

Michael on the track.

But, as the games progress, it's easy to see how special they really are.

During the 222 metre race Michael fell. When his mother asked him what happened when he fell, he answered, "I got up."

When Jackie got off the ice after doing her dance program, she realized that she had left out one of the parts of her routine. "Oh, well," she said philosophically, "nobody's perfect." There were no tears because of falls or last place standings. They were all there for the love of the sport, the thrill of the competition, and the excitement of meeting people from across the country.

Jackie Wanamaker after her bronze medal skate.

Michael started skating about four years ago and quickly became a force to be reckoned with. At 17, he is in grade 11 at William Aberhart High School and lives with his parents in a house that backs onto the Bowness Lagoon, one of Calgary's favourite skating places. With his dad as his coach,

Lanny MacDonald and speed skater Michael Jamieson.

Michael is on the ice almost every day, and on Sundays he gets to practice at the Oval. His mom calls Michael an "all round athlete" and in his room there are medals and trophies from many different sports.

Jackie Wanamaker, at 53, has been skating a little longer but left figure skating for the more serious pursuits of parenting and working while in her early twenties and only put her skates back on a few years ago. She has problems with her feet and back but still loves the sport. "I use it to relax me. It's exciting and gives me confidence, especially when people say they like you, that you look graceful."

Lanny MacDonald, the honorary chairperson of the Games, was at the Oval during the divisional races, and he was mobbed by his fans. Athletes, coaches, volunteers and officials all wanted a word or a photo with one of Calgary's great hockey stars. He signed autographs and talked companionably with the athletes about the stress and excitement of competition. He was on the ski hill at Calgary's Olympic Park watching the downhill races, when, because it was February 16, the crowd surprised him with a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday."

The Games are over. Michael and Jackie, along with many others, have more medals for their collections. But they take home much more than medals. The thrill of the cheering crowds, the excitement of competing, the new friendships forged with people from far away, these are the cherished memories which will never lose their shine. ❖

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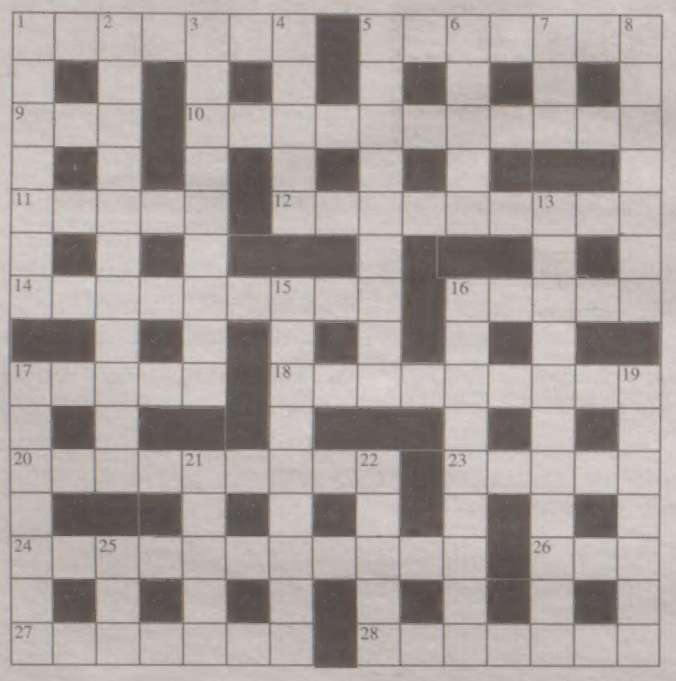
Please get involved.

CROSSWORD • *Puzzle 28*

BY SUSAN ANDREWS

ACROSS

1 Norse pirates (7)
5 Now existing (7)
9 Wreath of tropical flowers (3)
10 Conclusion not relating to evidence (3,8)
11 A thermoplastic synthetic resin (5)
12 Jacques Cousteau's inventions (4,5)
14 Publication of collections (9)
16 Forty are suggested for a night's sleep (5)
17 A recess in a wall – or market? (5)
18 Repeating, ie TV shows (9)
20 Bland (9)
23 A criminal (5)
24 Not working, useless (11)
26 Adjective denoting a person's birth name (3)
27 Resident of the Yukon (7)
28 Professional samplers (7)



DOWN

1 Explosive mountain (7)
2 Also called bric-a brac (5,6)
3 Somthing not meant to be eaten (9)
4 A coarse cinnamon bark (5)
5 Forerunner (9)
6 Of the same value (5)
7 Eastern Standard Time (3)
8 Pushes with repeated force (7)
13 What 'doves' believe in (3,8)
15 One was named Desire (6,3)
16 Fruits blown from trees (9)
17 To combine with nitrogen (7)
19 Good looks or male geese? (7)
21 Tiny, delicate features or body (5)
22 To turn to one side (5)
25 Exclamation of flight! (3)

▶ *Puzzle 28 answers will be published in the April 1 issue of* ***Spare Change****.*

Answers to March 1 Crossword #27

G	O	N	D	O	L	A	S	■	E	S	T	A	T	E
R	■	A	■	B	■	G	■	S	■	P	■	G	■	V
O	L	I	V	E	■	I	N	T	R	I	C	A	T	E
T	■	L	■	S	■	T	■	U	■	P	■	I	■	N
T	A	B	L	E	L	A	N	D	■	E	N	N	U	I
O	■	R	■	■	■	T	■	L	■	R	■	■	■	N
■	S	U	T	U	R	E	■	Y	O	W	L	■	N	G
H	■	S	■	K	■	■	■	■	■	E	■	G	■	S
A	S	H	T	R	A	Y	■	K	E	B	A	B	S	■
N	■	■	■	A	■	A	■	I	■	■	■	R	■	A
D	E	L	H	I	■	R	E	G	E	D	Y	I	N	G
I	■	A	■	N	■	R	■	O	■	E	■	C	■	E
C	A	P	R	I	C	O	R	N	■	C	H	A	I	N
A	■	E	■	A	■	W	■	O	■	A	■	T	■	C
P	O	L	A	N	D	■	P	S	A	L	T	E	R	Y

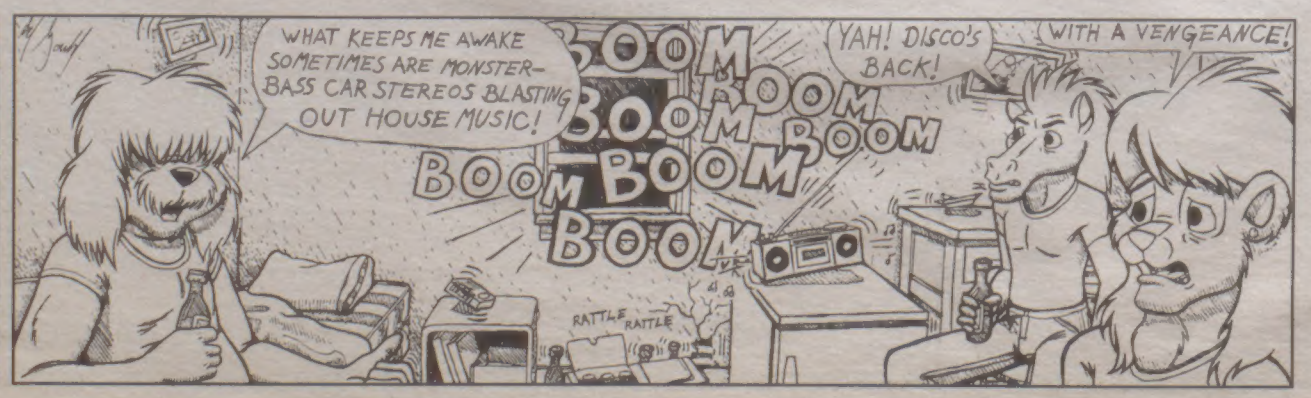
SOUPLINE BOB

OVERKILL

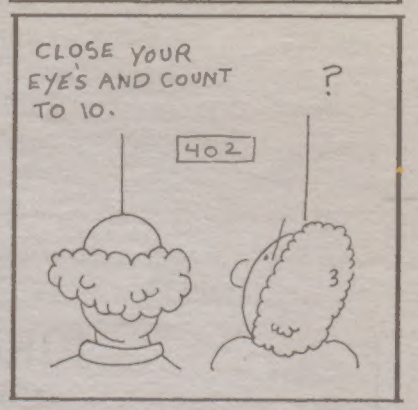
JSA YOUNG

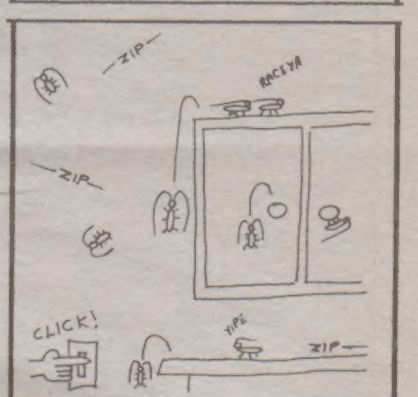
Vender-bender

CONCRETE JUNGLE



ROOMERS





A Christmas tragedy

BY HEATHER STUMP

The words "blood clot, brain aneurism, emergency surgery" were all scrambled up inside my head. What the hell does this doctor mean? It can't be true. Sobbing, I turned to look at the 15-year-old girl beside me. Her daughter. The tears flowed and flowed and would not stop as we tried to provide the girl with words of encouragement.

"She has a one percent chance of making it through the surgery," the doctor said.

Damn these fucking doctors anyways. They don't even know who this woman is and what she's lived through. How dare they say that about her. I admired her inner strength and courage, so strong and powerful. If anyone could live through it, she would. A stupid brain aneur.... or whatever they call it.

It's wrong, all wrong, this whole scene is wrong. We were all just together this morning, Christmas morning, yes, Christmas morning! We were all laughing. She was the centre of all of our reasons for being there. She was why we all came together to form a family. She was why we all felt accepted, wanted and loved.

She had wanted a shawl for Christmas, "like the ones the fancy ladies wear downtown," she had said. "I see them wearing them when I'm selling the papers," she explained. She opened the present Sonny, her common-law, had given her. She pulled it out of the box, a beautiful, cape-like shawl. The expression on her face said it all: "this is what I wanted!" She leaned over and kissed Sonny, and said "I love you babe," with a big smile.

"I look too rich to be selling papers in this," she laughed, standing in front of the Christmas tree. The words, the picture, keep going through my head, over and over. It does not match, not at all, what her daughter and I are exposed to now.

Just this morning she had been going out to check on the turkey.

Now they were doing the surgery on Christmas Day. Surgery to remove the blood clot that was putting immense pressure on her brain. She made it through the surgery! We knew she would. She's a fighter. She continued to fight through the night. Right on girl! Keep going, we know you will.

The private room off to the side of the intensive care waiting room was full of family. The fatigue and exhaustion were evident on some faces, raw shock on others. The surgeon stood at the front, white coat and stethoscope around his neck. They had to remove an extremely large portion of her brain, he said. She was

Spare Change Vendor Dayle

fully dependent on machines for her life. Cries exploded in different tones around the room. He went on, "Right now, there is a tube draining the fluid from the right side of her brain. It is evident that little pieces of her brain are passing through the tube, with the fluid."

Stop. Shut up, please! I beg you.

He continued to explain but I heard only mumbling. I didn't believe his words, I heard her words, "This is the best Christmas I've ever had."

On December 26, 1995, Dayle Vitkauskus died. She was born Cordillia Redwood, and when she was young they called her "Dilly". At the funeral her sister, who came from North Dakota, spoke, choking on her words... "the last time I saw my sister, it was 20 years ago."

Why? Why do things have to be this way? I wanted to speak to tell them how hard a life she had had. Tell them what an amazingly strong person she was to have survived the brutality of abusive relationships, life on the streets, and her strength to overcome her addictions. She never gave up, she determinedly picked up the pieces and moved forward. Most importantly, I wanted to tell them how happy she was, how much she had achieved, and how she was succeeding in her dreams and her goals.

The casket at the front of the church held my friend inside. The mother to Candace and Beverly. The mother to many, many of us. This was Sonny Joe's wife. Laying in the casket in her Christmas shawl.

The long drive home was filled with so many unanswered questions. There are plain and simple ones. Who will read to Sonny every night? Who will Candace write her poems for, and who will she make dessert for on Sundays? Who will Beverly run home from school for, to tell about the boy who likes her?

The house. It was once a home, but now it's empty. The furniture is still here, even her dumpster diving coffee cup, and the fireplace tools she bought at the flea market. I expect to see her walk through the doors wearing the old orange and white slippers she had from the women's shelter, and would not get rid of because they had history behind them. The natural nail polish sits on the headboard. I remember complimenting her on her nails; she had laughed, "I can grow them now. Before, I had to use them as a defence weapon. This is Sonny's status."

This home had been her dream, and she had achieved it. Her happiness and contentedness here can still be felt.

*Dayle Vitkauskus was a **Spare Change** vendor in Edmonton, mother of two teenage daughters. She died last Christmas after a very sudden aneurism. Heather Stump, who worked distributing newspapers to vendors in Edmonton, and was Dayle's friend, wrote this memoir.* ❖

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